

"Likeness to God as Far as Possible": Deification Doctrine in Iamblichus and Three Eastern Christian Fathers

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Deification of the soul is a concept shared by the Hellenic pagan philosophical tradition and Orthodox Christianity. In the ancient Greek language, the concept is denoted by two separate terms. For the pagan Neoplatonists, such as Iamblichus, the deification of the human being was described as *henôsis*, or unity with God.^[1] For Christian theologians of the Greek tradition, the term was *theôsis*, meaning a divine mode of existence.^[2] The difference resides in the ontological and metaphysical presuppositions informing these two philosophical and theological approaches.

Iamblichus considered deification (*henôsis*) as involving a creative partnership with God, realized through theurgic rituals that raise the soul up to the level of divine demiurgic power.^[3] In other words, the deified soul, for Iamblichus, is the soul that has come to experience the glorious satisfaction of maintaining the cosmic order - in other words, in sharing in the activity of the One. For the Orthodox Christian tradition, on the other hand, deification (*theôsis*) implies a state of being that was described, by the most gifted Church Fathers, as an endless, mystical yearning for divine fulfillment.^[4] Both Origen of Alexandria and Gregory of Nyssa argued that God is beyond the experience of humanity, who are destined to eternally strive - albeit unsuccessfully - for a complete experience of divinity. The most one can hope to attain is a fleeting sense of His infinite vastness. Later in the Christian tradition, however, Maximus the Confessor described *theôsis* as the replacement of the human ego by the divine presence.^[5] In both cases, the attribution of *theôsis* to these states is paradoxical. If I am eternally incapable of attaining Godhood, how can I ever claim to be deified? Conversely, if God overwhelms my existential center of being with His absolute presence, then do I not effectively cease to exist as a person?

In this paper, I will examine the manner in which the Christian tradition fluctuated between the two extremes of eternal separation from God, and the absolute, person-negating presence of God in the soul. It is in the pagan Neoplatonic tradition, as exemplified by Iamblichus, I will argue, that a personalistic, existentially viable theory of the *eskhaton* is to be found. By this I mean a theory in which the person, the soul, is intimately bound up with the inner working - or *eternally realized history* - of the cosmos, in so far as the soul co-operates with God in the maintenance of the cosmic order. This is precisely the goal of Iamblichean theurgy: to raise the soul to the level of perfect demiurgic co-operation with the highest divinity. Yet even Iamblichus' theory requires qualification - if it is to remain existentially viable - as I hope to make clear in the conclusion of this paper.^[6]

I.

In the Neoplatonic tradition - both pagan and Christian - the concept of deification was generally traced back to, and lent support by, the following passage from Plato's *Theaetetus*: "a man should make all haste to escape from earth to heaven; and escape means becoming as like God as possible [*homoiôsis theô kata to dunaton*]" (176b.1-2).^[7] Until the time of Eudorus of Alexandria (fl. ca. 50-25 B.C.) the qualification "as far as possible" was understood as referring to the corruptibility of the body, which was thought to prevent a complete assimilation to the divine.^[8] Eudorus, however, interpreted this statement as referring to the perfection of a human being's intellectual capacity. Indeed, as Plato himself states, in the very next line, the man who desires assimilation to the divine must possess "understanding [*phronêsis*]" (176b.2-3, tr. Levett, Burnyeat).

This led to an increasingly sharp distinction between soul and body, which again found support in the writings of Plato, who had posited a tripartite soul.^[9] The body came to be understood as a prison for the rational part of the soul, the intellect (*nous*), and salvation, consequently, was conceived in terms of the intellect's breaking away from its somatic fetters. This notion was given sophisticated mytho-poetical expression in Gnosticism. "Salvation belongs only to the soul," writes Basilides, "the body is by nature corruptible."^[10] However, this idea found its strongest philosophical proponent in Plotinus, who argued that the descent of the soul into the body is required for the maintenance of the cosmic order, but the

highest part of the soul - the rational part - remains always above the realm of matter and change, at home with universal Mind.[\[11\]](#)

In both Christianity and the post-Plotinian Neoplatonism of Iamblichus and his successors, the idea that the highest part of the tripartite soul remains ever above the material realm was largely discarded in favor of the view that the soul is, *in toto*, completely a part of the cosmos, and that salvation must involve a 'holistic' approach to transcendence.[\[12\]](#) The methods employed by Christians and Iamblichean theurgists were quite similar. Both involved the use of material substances - for the Christians it was wine, bread, water, ointments, incense; for the theurgists it was stones, gems, herbs, etc. And both involved the belief that God's power somehow imbues these material substances with salvific power, when utilized in the proper ritual context.

Yet here is where the similarities end. For Iamblichus believed in an all-pervasive deity whose power extended to the nether reaches of the cosmos, eternally and unalterably.[\[13\]](#) Christians, on the other hand, believe that God descended to the depths of Hades only once, at a specific point in history, i.e., the Christ Event (the Incarnation, death, and Resurrection of the Lord). This difference is due to a profound dissimilarity between their respective views regarding cosmology and, most of all, temporality.

As a pagan, Iamblichus believed in the eternity of the cosmos.[\[14\]](#) However, he did not, like the Stoics, believe that the cosmos repeats itself identically over the course of vast aeonic cycles. Rather, he believed that the cosmos is the eternal revelation of the divinity in a graded system of emanations, in which the various entities occupying the different levels of reality come to grasp divinity in a manner suitable to their nature.[\[15\]](#) Indeed, as he explains, even the lowest forms of inanimate life, like stones, are 'pierced' by the divine power. Recognizing a hierarchy of causal principles in the cosmos, Iamblichus remarks that, regardless of the point at which a principle takes effect, "it does not cease its operation before extending to the lowest level; for even if is stronger, nevertheless the fact of its greater separation can create a balancing factor, rendering it weaker ... the influence of the higher principles is more piercing [*drimuteran*], more keenly felt."[\[16\]](#)

What Iamblichus is saying here is that God must expend more energy in order to maintain the lower part of His creation than is necessary to maintain the higher part. This is in stark contrast to Plotinus, who maintained that the emanation of reality from the One gradually dissipates in ever cruder forms of 'contemplation' (*theôria*), not all of which have a destiny of integration with a higher principle.[\[17\]](#) The notion that the power of God is more concentrated at lower levels of reality gave support to Iamblichus' doctrine, which called for the use of stones and herbs in theurgical ritual, the purpose of which was to raise the human power closer to the divine. As Iamblichus is careful to explain: "[theurgy] does not draw down the impassive and pure Gods to that which is passive and impure; but, on the contrary, it renders us, who have become passive through generation, pure and immutable."[\[18\]](#)

This is precisely the opposite of Christian doctrine, which maintains that God became human in response to human sinfulness.[\[19\]](#) In the Orthodox Christian Liturgy, the priest asks the congregation to forgive him his sins. This acknowledges the fact that even the Liturgy (*leitourgia*) is presided over by one who is immersed in sin. Such an admission is not part of Iamblichus' ritual program, for he was very conscious of the intellectually curative power of not only the stones and herbs, but of the ritual itself, which did involve prayer and an authentically intellectual communion with the deity. He writes as follows:

Extended practice of prayer nurtures our intellect, enlarges very greatly our soul's receptivity to the gods, reveals to men the life of the gods and accustoms their eyes to the brightness of divine light, and gradually brings to perfection the capacity of our faculties for contact with the gods, until it leads us up to the highest level of consciousness of which we are capable; also, it elevates gently the dispositions of our minds [*ta tês dianoias êthê*] and communicates to us those of the gods, stimulates persuasion and communion and indissoluble friendship [*peithô de kai koinônian kai philian adialuton egeirei*], augments divine love, kindles the divine element in the soul and scours away all contrary tendencies within it, casts out from the ethereal and luminous vehicle surrounding the soul everything that tends to generation, brings to perfection good hope and faith concerning the light; and, in a word, it renders those who employ prayers, if we may so express it, the familiar consorts of the gods.[\[20\]](#)

The purpose of Iamblichean theurgy, then, is not to supplicate the gods and ask them to pardon one's sinfulness, but rather to purify the soul so that it may consort with the gods, on an equal footing. The theurgist, unlike the Christian priest, does not debase himself before his God; instead, he raises himself up to communion with the divinity. As G. Shaw explains:

By means of appropriate rites the theurgist directed the powers of his particular soul (*mikros kosmos*) into alignment with the powers of the World Soul ... which gave him direct participation in the 'whole.' He became a *theios aner*, universal and divine yet particular and mortal...[21]

The deification of the human soul is realized by the mortal human being, according to Iamblichus. In the absence of an eschatological schema, we find a theory of deification that does not involve history, but only the independent, willful activity of the free human intellect.

For Iamblichus does not, like the Christian Fathers, posit universal history as the soteriological locus of human self-fulfillment; rather, he sees the timelessness of theurgic ritual as the locus of human self-expression leading to a union (*henôsis*) with the gods.

... the theurgic soul becomes perfectly established in the energies and demiurgic intellections of [divine] powers. Then, also, it inserts the soul in the whole demiurgic God. [22]

The final result is "a union with the Gods, who are the givers of every good [*tôn agathôn dotêras theous henôsin*]." [23] This is accomplished both temporally and atemporally, and introduces no distinction between present and future, but simply offers the soul a way of participating in the creative (demiurgic) activity of the godhead while still inhabiting the fleshly body. Existentially speaking, this overcoming of temporality by the temporal soul should be regarded as a great boon to the authentic life. However, Iamblichus' thought is not free from the determinism so characteristic of late pagan thinking, for he sees the cosmos as bound by itself to itself, with no possibility of transcendence. [24] This includes the eternal inclusion of souls in the ever-repeating cosmic process. The final soteric reward of souls is described by Iamblichus as follows: "this reward includes a return to this realm and an authority over things in it. ... According to the ancients (*palaioi*), souls 'are freed from generation and together with the gods administer (*sundioikousi*) the universe.'" [25]

This 'administration,' for Iamblichus, is understood as the re-entrance of the soul into the cosmic cycle. This means that the soul somehow remembers its previous incarnations, and seeks to overcome the negative influences of those now-defunct self-expressions. Since the soul is "freed from generation," it now becomes as eternal and unchangeable as the cosmos itself. The attractiveness of Iamblichus' theory resides in its sense of intimate partnership of God and the soul, as both participate in the demiurgic maintenance of the cosmos. However, from an Existential-Personalist viewpoint, the maintenance of an unchanging order offers no room for personal creativity and growth, only an endless 'perfect' state of harmony of self with cosmos. Yet what commends Iamblichus' thought to us from an Existentialist-Personalist perspective, is the fact that even though the theurgical soul becomes locked into a permanent state of participation with the demiurge, with a view to the eternal maintenance of the cosmos, this soul experiences a very direct transference of natures within an already realized history - i.e., within the closed perfection of the cosmos, as conceived by Iamblichus and his pagan Neoplatonist colleagues. For Iamblichus, the soul of the theurgist becomes a true "partner" (*koinônos*) with God, not merely passive partakers of the divine nature. [26]

Whereas Origen and Gregory were only able to conceive of an *eskhaton* in which human striving must remain forever unfulfilled, and Maximus was only able to conceive of an *eskhaton* in which the human person loses its existential center, Iamblichus found a place for human creative striving in history - albeit a history already ordered by the divine mind, of which the soteriological soul now participates on equal terms, through theurgic ritual. This is why, I believe, the system of Iamblichus should be given careful consideration in relation to later developments in Christian eschatology, notably in the works of Berdyaev. While Iamblichus' idea of salvation is rather more dynamic than that of later Christian theologians like Maximus the Confessor, [27] it nevertheless ends in the same general state - that of the replacement of human initiative by an eternally positive, *divine*, order. "The most perfect ... has as its

mark ineffable unification, which establishes all authority in the gods and provides that our souls rest completely in them" (*De Mysteriis* 5.26).^[28]

However, when one looks more closely at the respective soul-centered eschatologies of Iamblichus and the three Christian Fathers discussed here, I believe one will find that, in spite of a shared historical determinism, a very subtle but profound difference appears - between determinism *in* history (Iamblichus) and determinism *by* history (the Christian Fathers). We will now proceed to a discussion of this distinction.

II.

Iamblichus' notion of the soul's salvation is not, at first glance, all that different from the conceptions of later Christian thought, particularly Maximus the Confessor. Iamblichus conceived of the *eskhaton* as the perfect unification of soul and cosmos, in which the soul finds rest, and the authority of the divinity is maintained in and for eternity. Maximus, similarly, understood the *eskhaton* as the replacement of the human ego - the existential center of the soul, the self - with the absolute and absolutizing presence of God. So why should Iamblichus' conception be given primacy from an Existentialist-Personalistic philosophical perspective?

The answer resides in the relationship of the soul to history, i.e., to the manner in which the human being responds to the inevitable and inescapable historical circumstances in which it finds itself. History is at once the locus of my self-realization as a person, and the limiting factor in my creative expression of my personhood. As the Russian philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev has explained:

History treats me very roughly, and it shows not the slightest concern for my well-being. That is one aspect of it. But history is also my history. I have indeed had a share in its happening. If man holds the cosmos within him, there is all the more reason for saying that he includes history within him. In the spiritual depth of me - in transcendental man - the contradiction is removed. The history of Israel, Egypt, Persia, Babylon, Greece, and Rome, of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance occurred with my participation, it is my history and for that reason only can it be intelligible to me. It is my path, my quest and my lure. Its falls and its uplifting are mine. If for me this were mere objectification in which everything is received from without only, then I should be able to understand nothing of it.^[29]

The understanding of history is paramount, for it is also the understanding of our universal personhood. In the philosophical theology of Origen of Alexandria, the historical becoming of the soul is said to continue even after salvation, as the intellect gradually becomes more accustomed to the perception of divine things. In Origen we find a dynamism in the *eskhaton*. Deification occurs, but it is not perfect assimilation of the soul to the Godhead; rather, it is a continual motion toward divinity. We find a similar idea in Gregory of Nyssa's concept of *diastêma*, in which the soul is said to strive eternally for God, who remains forever aloof.

However, when considered in this way, how can history ever be, as Berdyaev declares, *my* history? My striving for God, for deification, becomes merely a function of a cosmos that must always exceed me - or, in the case of Maximus, of a deity of which my existence is a mere function. What distinguishes Iamblichus' view from that of these three Church Fathers is the presence of an atemporal ontology, which tempers his brand of historical determinism (determination *in* history as opposed to determination *by* history).

Historical determinism for Origen and Gregory means that history is an inescapable, ongoing process of motion toward god. Both Origen and Gregory adhered to a peculiarly Christian brand of *apokatastasis* doctrine (first developed by Origen), which implied innumerable incarnations of the soul in the cosmos, until that soul at last was purged of its sinfulness and re-united with God. Maximus, while adhering to such a doctrine early in his career, abandoned it in favor of a belief in ascetic purging of the soul leading to an emptying of the self, in preparation for the complete replacement of the ego by the divine presence. For Origen and Gregory, the soul's salvation was assured; it may take countless ages to perfect, but it will occur ... eventually. Maximus was not so optimistic, but he nevertheless believed that the goal of history was the perfection - deification - of the entire cosmos, including all of nature (not just human souls). Both of these Christian positions are attractive enough, to be sure; but what they are lacking is the sense of intimate, human-divine participation that one finds in the theory of

Iamblichus. According to Origen and Gregory, endless striving - never satiated - for the divine presence is the definition of salvation; for Maximus, the ego relinquishes its unique position in history in favor of a dissolution into the Godhead. Iamblichus, however, understands salvation rather differently.

Iamblichus sees the theurgical act as universal, as 'holding sway' for all eternity, within the divine order of the cosmos. The autonomous act of the soul participating in theurgical ritual is in no way determined or guided by historical circumstance - it is a supreme act of self-expression. However, it is an act that results, paradoxically, in the loss of the ability to express oneself; - for ultimately, it is the divinity that maintains the cosmos, not the human soul, for all that the soul may do to participate in the cosmic maintenance. However, once the soul achieves such participation, the disconnect between self-expression and divine existence is overcome, and the soul realizes itself as a divine being (*theios anêr*) - a product equally of history and personal striving. Here we arrive at the most important aspect of Iamblican theurgy: the soul, although determined by the already appointed course of cosmic history, becomes what it is through a ritual activity that unites the soul with the gods; and, in so doing, the soul changes its ontological status from that of mere mortal to immortal, to divinity. History is not overcome, but fulfilled ... eternally.

III.

In order to understand the main difference between Iamblichus and the above-mentioned Church Fathers, the following distinction will likely be helpful. For Iamblichus, the final goal of theurgy is the overcoming of the particular mode of existence of a soul immersed in the lowest sphere of divine emanation: the material cosmos. Once the soul ascends upward through the planetary spheres, and sheds the various accretions acquired through physical birth and immersion in the sub-lunar realm, the lure of its old life is abolished, and a new cosmic life is made possible - the soul becomes a divine being (*theios anêr*). History - i.e., the unique temporal life of the person - is overcome in favor of a unification of the particular (the human soul) with the universal (God). For Origen and Gregory, on the other hand, history involves the gradual revelation of God to His creation - it does not involve any sort of instantaneous union through theurgical ritual. In this case, the activity of the human soul is relegated to that of student, with God as pedagogue. According to Origen, God teaches the soul about its proper mode of existence over the course of numerous ages, a concept necessarily involving a doctrine of transmigration of souls. According to Gregory, God is revealed through the manifestation of his activities (*energeiai*) in the cosmos. The eschatological visions of Origen and his most gifted pupil, Gregory, are quite similar.

For Origen, the *eskhaton* involves an eternal education of the finite soul in divine things. For Gregory, the *eskhaton* involves an eternal striving of the finite soul for the infinite divine essence. History, in both cases, is not fulfilled (at the personal level), as it is in Iamblichus, but rather infinitely extended beyond the purview of the finite human being. But when history is extended in this manner, it ceases to belong to the human beings who both respond to it and craft it in unique ways, creating the life of the world that fosters all intellectual and religious pursuits. The *eskhaton* must be located outside of history, and for this, an atemporal ontology is necessary. It is just such an ontology, I believe, that we may find in Iamblichus, if we look closely enough. As Berdyaev writes:

History is in truth the path to another world. It is in this sense that its content is religious. But the perfect state is impossible within history itself; it can only be realized outside its framework.[\[30\]](#)

Iamblichus shows us a way of moving beyond the framework of history, understood as the locus of limitation of the encosmic human soul. Yet he ends up establishing the locus of the atemporal human soul precisely within the very context from which it supposedly eradicated itself through the theurgic ritual of divine ascent. There is no realization of the perfected human soul outside of history, only the *enshrinement* of human striving in the unchangeable, eternal, and divine cosmos - *but this itself is an overcoming of history, and therefore of the determinism that is always connected in some form or other with history.*

This mild criticism of Iamblichus does not, however, detract from the supreme importance he places on the soul's participation in the Godhead - a participation more direct, more mutual, and more individually creative than what is found in Christian liturgical and mystical writings.[\[31\]](#)

All of theurgy has a two-fold character. One is that it is a rite conducted by men which preserves our natural order in the universe; the other is that it is empowered by divine symbols [*theia sunthêmata*], is raised up through them to be joined on high with the Gods, and is led harmoniously round to their order. This latter aspect can rightly be called 'taking the shape of the Gods' [*theôn katamathômen*].^[32]

Unlike Christian eschatology, the *telos* of Iamblichean theurgy is not the establishment of a new mode of existence outside this cosmos, but a perfection of human-divine existence within the cosmos. While this eliminates the historical dimension of human existence - i.e., striving for an indeterminate future - it *does* preserve the creative aspect of our intellectual union with a higher, divine principle.

Conclusion

We must ask whether the preservation of human creativity in Iamblichus' conception of an encosmic partnership with the Demiurge, resulting in a complete conformation of human beings with divinity, is preferable to the Origenist-inspired Christian conception of an eternal striving (beyond the cosmos) for an intellectual grasp of the divine mysteries - one in which the unique character of the human soul remains intact, while never truly becoming united with divinity. The implication of Iamblichean *henôsis* and Christian *theôsis* were brought together in the thought of Maximus the Confessor, who simply enshrined human striving in a 'deified' state in which the human nature ceased to function, giving way wholly to the divine. It is the task of an Existential-Personalist eschatology to unite these two differing theoretical approaches to the soul and its final destiny in relation to God.

For Iamblichus, the final result of the soul's quest for deification was quite clear, as he explains in a fragment of his *Letter to Macedonius (On Fate)*, where he writes:

It is the life that is lived in accordance with intellect and that cleaves to the gods that we must train ourselves to live; for this is the only life which admits of the untrammelled authority of the soul, frees us from the bonds of necessity, and allows us to live a life no longer mortal, but one that is divine and filled by the will of the gods with divine benefits.^[33]

It is difficult to conceive of an eschatological state more favorable to the life of the intellect than what is described here by Iamblichus. The final question, however, is whether the lack of striving and the loss of an existential, situationist freedom (such as that described by Sartre, for example)^[34] is a fair price to pay for such a state of noetic bliss. Is "likeness to God as far as possible" a pre-determined outcome of a life properly lived? Or is it the effervescent self-expression of a creative being demanding not the assurance of divine staticity, but rather the glorious affirmation of a will that is neither human nor divine - but *supremely transcendent*?

Notes:

^[1] See, for example, *De Mysteriis* 10.5.34-35.

^[2] See, for example, Gregory Nazianzen, *De filio* (*Orat.* 30) 21.27-33 (ed. Barbel), and also the interesting passage in John of Damascus, *De natura composita* 3.4-7.

^[3] See G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus* (University Park, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press 1995), p. 51.

^[4] This notion is first found in Origen's *De Principiis*, 2.11.7, where he uses the notion of an eternal feasting on divine food. It is later developed along more mystical lines by Gregory of Nyssa. On Gregory, see H. Urs von Balthasar, *Presence and Thought: An Essay on the Religious Philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa*, tr. M. Seban (San Francisco: Ignatius Press 1995), Part One, Chapter 1.

^[5] Maximus, *Chapters on Knowledge* 2.88; also L. Thunberg, *Man and the Cosmos: The Vision of St. Maximus the Confessor* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1985), p. 89

^[6] When I speak of personalism and existentialism, I am referring mainly to the work of Russian

philosopher Nicholas Berdyaev, for whom human freedom is essentially creative, and geared toward an *eskhaton* in which personal creative activity is enshrined in/as the human image of God. See, for example, Berdyaev's major works, *Slavery and Freedom*, *The Destiny of Man*, *The Meaning of History* and *Truth and Revelation*.

[7] Tr. M.J. Levett, revised by M. Burnyeat, in J.M Cooper, ed., *Plato: Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett 1997).

[8] See J. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 1977), p. 123.

[9] See, for example, *Phaedrus* 253.c.7 ff.

[10] The account of Basilides' teaching by Irenaeus 1.24.4-5, tr. B. Layton, in *The Gnostic Scriptures* (New York: Doubleday 1987), p. 423.

[11] See, for example, *Ennead* 4.8.7.

[12] See G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, Chapter 5, esp. p. 65.

[13] In a passage surely of inspiration for Proclus, Iamblichus writes: "every order is presided over by its unparticipated monad, prior to the participated elements" (Fr. 54 = Proclus, *In Tim.* II 240, 4 ff. Diehl; tr. Dillon, Gerson, *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*, p. 253).

[14] Belief in the eternity of the cosmos, it must be remarked, was not a strictly pagan teaching. The Christian scholar Stephanus of Alexandria (ca. 610 A.D.) adhered to the pagan doctrine of the cosmos' indestructibility. Maximus the Confessor likely knew of Stephanus' teachings, if not the man himself.

[15] See Iamblichus, *Letter to Macedonius (On Fate)*, Fr. 5 = Stobaeus *Anthologium* II 175, 1-15, ed. Wachsmuth, Hense.

[16] Olympiodorus, *In Platonis Alcibiadiem commentarii* 110.15-111.1 (Westerinck) = Fr. 8 (Dillon), quoted in J. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press 1985), p. 47.

[17] *Ennead* 3.8.4-7.

[18] *De Mysteriis* 1.12, tr. Taylor.

[19] Athanasius, *De incarnatione verbi* 54.3.1-2: "For God became man so that we might become God" - my translation.

[20] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 5.26.18-40, tr. J. Dillon, L.P. Gerson, *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings* (Indianapolis: Hackett 2004), p. 232.

[21] G. Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul: The Neoplatonism of Iamblichus*, p. 51.

[22] Iamblichus, *De Mysteriis* 10.6.9-13, tr. Taylor.

[23] *Ibid.*, 10.5.35, tr. Taylor.

[24] *Commentary on Timaeus*, see Fragments 7, 29, 50, 53, 54 (= Proclus, *In Tim.* I 77, 24 ff.; 230, 5 ff.; II 104, 30 ff.; 215, 5 ff.; 240, 4 ff. [Diehl]).

[25] J. Finamore, *Iamblichus and the Theory of the Vehicle of the Soul*, p. 26.

[26] See 2 Peter 1:4, read in light of the doctrines of Maximus.

[27] While we do find, in Maximus, a concept of human-divine participation, this does not include any real creative partnership with God. Rather, Maximus views our partnership with God in strictly

eschatological terms, involving the realization of God as primordial human being, which Maximus understands as the goal of creation in the first place. The uniqueness of the human person finds no place in Maximus' thought.

[28] Tr. J. Dillon, L.P. Gerson, *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*, p. 231.

[29] N. Berdyaev, *Truth and Revelation*, tr. R.M. French (New York: Collier Books 1962), p. 84.

[30] N. Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, tr. G. Reavey (Cleveland: World Publishing Company 1962), p. 170.

[31] See, for comparison, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Lectures on the Christian Sacraments: The Procatechesis and the Five Mystical Catecheses*, ed. F.L. Cross (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press 1995).

[32] *De Mysteriis* 184, 1-8 [1.12.33-41 f.], in Shaw, *Theurgy and the Soul*, p. 51 - translation modified.

[33] Fragment 3 (= Stobaeus *Anthologium* II 173, 18-24, ed. Wachsmuth, Hense), tr. J. Dillon, L.P. Gerson, *Neoplatonic Philosophy: Introductory Readings*, p. 245.

[34] See J.-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, in R.C. Solomon, ed., *Phenomenology and Existentialism* (New York: Harper and Row 1972), p. 465.